

What is claimed is:

1. A flotation swimsuit comprising:

a form-fitting torso covering, said form-fitting torso covering including a retaining pocket;

a unitary flotation element for retention by said retaining pocket, said unitary flotation element including:

a backsheet comprising a layer of buoyant material having a thickness within a first predetermined range for providing general buoyancy to a wearer, said backsheet including an inner surface for presentation toward a wearer and an outer surface for presentation away from a wearer; and

a plurality of raised portions integrally carried by said backsheet in fixed relative positions for providing enhanced buoyancy to strategically selected areas of the wearer's body, each of said raised portions comprising a buoyant material having a thickness substantially greater than that of said backsheet and each of said raised portions extending outwardly from said outer surface of said backsheet.

2. The flotation swimsuit of Claim 1, wherein said retaining pocket includes a

sheet of fabric, said sheet of fabric being laminated to the outwardly disposed surface of said unitary flotation element to ensure that said fabric sheet closely matches the contours of said backsheet and enhanced buoyancy regions of said unitary flotation element.

3. The flotation swimsuit of Claim 1, wherein said retaining pocket includes a sheet of fabric having an indicator dye which bleaches upon exposure to the elements to notify the wearer of degradation of the swimsuit components.

4. The flotation swimsuit of Claim 1, wherein said plurality of raised portions include an upper torso portion and a lower torso portion.

5. A unitary flotation element for use in a floatation swimsuit, said floatation element comprising:

a backsheet comprising a layer of buoyant material having a thickness within a first predetermined range for providing general buoyancy to a wearer, said backsheet including an inner surface for presentation toward a wearer and an outer surface for presentation away from a wearer;

a plurality of raised portions integrally carried by said backsheet in fixed relative positions for providing enhanced buoyancy to strategically selected areas of the wearer's body, each of said raised portions comprising a buoyant material having a thickness substantially greater than that of said backsheet and each of said raised portions extending outwardly from said outer surface of said backsheet.

6. The flotation swimsuit of Claim 5, wherein said plurality of raised portions include an upper torso portion and a lower torso portion.

Sub BB > 7. A flotation swimsuit comprising:

a form-fitting torso covering, said form-fitting torso covering including a distributed layer of buoyant material distributed substantially throughout for providing general buoyancy to the wearer, said distributed layer of buoyant material having a thickness in a first particular range; and

a plurality of enhanced buoyancy regions integrally carried by said distributed layer of buoyant material in fixed positions for providing enhanced buoyancy to strategically selected areas of the wearer's body, each of said enhanced buoyancy regions comprising a buoyant material having a thickness substantially greater than that of said distributed layer of buoyant material and extending outwardly therefrom.

8. The flotation swimsuit of Claim 7, wherein said plurality of raised portions include an upper torso portion and a lower torso portion.

9. The flotation swimsuit of claim 7, further comprising a fastenable torso opening.

10. The flotation swimsuit of claim 9, wherein said fastenable torso opening includes a fastenable chest opening.

11. The flotation swimsuit of claim 9, wherein said fastenable torso opening includes a fastenable back opening.

12. The flotation swimsuit of claim 9, wherein said fastenable torso opening includes a fastener selected from the group consisting of a zipper, a hook and loop fastener, a button, a snap, a tie, and a strap.

5

13. A method of manufacturing a flotation swimsuit comprising the steps of:
providing a form-fitting torso covering having an element retaining pocket;
providing a unitary flotation element having a backsheet comprising a layer of
buoyant material having a thickness within a first predetermined range and a plurality of
10 raised portions integrally carried by said backsheet for providing enhanced buoyancy to
strategically selected areas of the wearer's body;
positioning said unitary flotation element at a desired location adjacent said form-
fitting torso covering;
securing said unitary flotation element within said element retaining pocket.

15

14. A flotation swimsuit comprising:
a form-fitting torso covering, said form-fitting torso covering including a
retaining pocket;
a unitary flotation element for retention by said retaining pocket, said unitary
20 flotation element including:
a backsheet comprising a layer of buoyant material having a
thickness within a first predetermined range for providing general buoyancy
to a wearer, said backsheet including an inner surface for presentation

toward a wearer and an outer surface for presentation away from a wearer;
and

5 a plurality of raised portions integrally carried by said backsheet in fixed relative positions for providing enhanced buoyancy to strategically selected areas of the wearer's body, each of said raised portions comprising a buoyant material having a thickness substantially greater than that of said backsheet and each of said raised portions extending outwardly from said outer surface of said backsheet;

10 wherein plurality of raised portions include an upper torso portion and a lower torso portion and said retaining pocket includes a sheet of fabric, said sheet of fabric being laminated to the outwardly disposed surface of said unitary flotation element to ensure that said fabric sheet closely matches the contours of said backsheet and enhanced buoyancy regions of said unitary flotation element.